

Nation



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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou/Eenou Istchee)
Grand conseil des Cris (Eeyou/Eenou Istchee)



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The death of National Aboriginal Health

By Will Nicholls

People believed in 2000 that it was time that Aboriginal people here in Canada started to look at and study health issues relating to them. Thus the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) was born. Today that belief has fallen by the roadside and they'll be closing shop on June 30. Health Canada has seen fit to cut funding to NAHO and to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Surprisingly there is no outcry among leaders and Aboriginal organizations. Northwest Territories' Assembly of First Nations (AFN) representative Bill Erasmus said the AFN passed a resolution a few years ago asking for NAHO's funding to go to communities. He added the AFN withdrew support for NAHO because of a disagreement how NAHO was run. Even so Erasmus admitted he had concerns with Health Canada's decision to axe funding for NAHO. "I don't think the Canadian government understands the legal relationship and the contribution they have to make to that, in other words, they talk about having difficulty with covering health care – well, it's a right. . . it's in the treaties, it's very specific that we get free health," he said.

Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq defended the decision saying NAHO had "repeated organizational problems". She added, "Health Canada worked with NAHO in an attempt to resolve these issues but, unfortunately, they were not addressed."

Even with these problems the move is surprising given facts put out by the current government. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada developed a Community Well Being (CWB) scale for First Nations. It measured education, labour force participation, income and housing and reveals Aboriginal communities make up 65 of the 100 unhealthiest Canadian communities.

Then we know Aboriginal citizens in Canada die an average of 10 years before the rest of the population. Our children have an infant mortality rate three times higher, serious injuries are experienced four times the national average and we haven't even tackled the high rates of diabetes, heart problems and diseases. Every indication points to Canada's Aboriginals facing a public health crisis.

NAHO assembled an amazing database of Aboriginal health research. It's estimated NAHO has more than \$60 million in information on First Nations, Métis and Inuit health. The research isn't something that's just sitting on the shelf either. Simon Brascoupé, NAHO's chief executive officer, said NAHO's website had 640,000 downloads of health information last year.

Though many are worried this information may be lost, Brascoupé said the organization hopes to negotiate an agreement with a university or health research institution to take over its holdings and make sure the information doesn't get lost.

Some Aboriginal people are speaking out, like Alex McComber, who said, "This is sad news for Indigenous peoples and our children and future generations. Just another oppressive colonial move by this government who sees priority in being on its knees in front of the one percent, who prefer personal economic gain, war and oppression as the way to go."

Others ask why research is on the chopping block when it is evident it is needed? Given the short amount of time remaining, the demise of NAHO is a foregone conclusion. One might ask why, but the answer is obvious. The federal government under Harper's administration is traditionalist and given the damaging results of most studies it was time to kill the messenger.

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photo by:
Will Nicholls

Spring delicacies

By Sonny Orr



The goose fat drips on the hot rocks surrounding the lazy fire. The goose, impressively fat, gets flipped over deftly by googum. This makes my eyes focus on the little chip of wood twirling around on the string that holds my favourite meal in just the right range from the fire. The wood, specially chosen from impossibly knotted wood and white bone dry over time, makes the smoke flavour the succulent meat. This whole goose flipping business goes on until the sixth goose is flipped.

Further up in the tepee, fish heads sewn onto a long line have been drying and cooked until dry black-brown hard. These get put away for further drying, away from weeks of heat, alongside a few dried lungs of caribou for good measure. The sucker heads, and even the main parts, will eventually get ground up into a fine powder and mixed with bear fats and blueberries. And basically the same thing for the dried lungs is done, months later.

Also drying out are thin slabs of caribou meats, various ducks and, on occasion, a bread dough is slowly rising. The fats, still dripping, are collected on sheets of aluminium, which, when the occasion arises, will be boiled until all the grease is gone from the sheets and collected as it rises to the tops of the pot.

Little nephew pokes his head in the tepee door flap, his snotty red nose tells us that he just came from some great adventure, probably wrestling with a porcupine this time. He solemnly tells us that a goose has landed in the nearby creek. The shotguns emerge and the quick sneak-up behind the small grove of willows reveal that indeed a goose has landed. A shot is fired and the small canoe is slipped into

the quick waters of the creek. Minutes later, the bird is being prepared for a proper meal of goose and potatoes stew. Don't forget the onion, someone suggests.

Perhaps other people know about whether or not the geese are flying north today. In a crackle, the HF radio answers back that in the camps further south, everyone is at the blind and ponds. Finally, after a long, cold and dry spring, the geese have decided that it is a good day to take a risk and fly north, to the safety of the frozen tundra, where there is nothing to hide behind. This way, no one can sneak up within a mile or two without being spotted.

Along with the geese, the female caribou head north to the calving grounds of the same tundra. This is mainly to get away from the suffocating heat of the forests and crazy constantly biting mosquitoes and black flies. Of course, the number one natural predator, the wolf, is around, but give nary a look at humans in their isolated cabins. He knows that if they do show up, he might end up on someone's parka.

Sometimes, a jet flies by at 30,000 feet, the passengers totally unaware that there is life down in that vast horizon to horizon landscape called northern Quebec. Little nephew wipes his nose and heads out the tepee for another adventure, while the goose starts boiling in the pot over the fire, joining other foods that were harvested from this barren land. Everyone gets prepared for the arrival of the spring goose, and the camp quietens as the hunters leave for their favourite spot. The goose gets flipped again by googum...

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Outfoxing the competition

Stornoway's Mecheshoo development Quebec's first diamond mine

By Shaun Malley

The Mecheshoo Agreement between the nation of Mistissini and Stornoway Diamond Corporation was signed on March 27, laying the groundwork for the company's Renard Diamond Project. It will be the first of its kind in Quebec. Though no hard numbers were released, Mistissini's chief assured everyone assembled that those most affected would get a fair share of the spoils.

"This is a unique model for cooperation," said Chief Richard Shecapio of the Cree Nation of Mistissini. "The families of our impacted territory [...] will directly benefit from the project."

Stornoway had agreed to give hiring preference to Crees of the territory, starting with the families closest to the mine and moving outwards. The agreement also has a proviso to help the people of the area with the Mistissini/Renard Training Fund, a set of job-training schemes. The company will also auction contracts every year for Cree entrepreneurs to bid upon, with everything from supply to chain to maintenance presumably on offer while the mine is in operation.

The major players met at Mistissini's sports centre to conclude the agreement. Over a hundred locals packed the main hall to witness the signing and hear more about the project. Among the notables were members of the Swallow family of Mistissini's M11 territory, from whose trapline the diamonds will be unearthed. Stornoway made promises to the area's talleyman that they will be consulted before the crucial spring goose and fall moose hunting seasons to determine no-fly zones and exclusion areas.

The Swallow family Elders opened the signing ceremony with a bilingual benediction – the hundred or so in attendance stood reverently while representatives of the media flitted about capturing the moment.

Also present at the side of Shecapio were Eeyou Istchee Grand Chief



Matthew Coon Come and Stornoway CEO Matt Manson. A speech was given by each, and the deal was then set in stone with a few strokes of a pen. It was a formality that had resulted from years of negotiations.

A multi-million dollar feasibility study concluded late last year that tens of billions of dollars in diamonds are locked in the earth in M11 territory. If all goes to plan, the first shiny lumps of sparkly compressed carbon will leave the mine in three years.

Stornoway's CEO promised to integrate Cree at all levels of the business, from mining to top brass. Benefits for all of Eeyou, especially those of Mistissini and the families of M11 territory in particular, were positioned as key components of the agreement. It also pledges to provide other benefits directly to Cree employees, including polling stations during Cree elections, as well as both goose and moose breaks as part of paid vacations. Though hunting and fishing are prohibited around the mine's safety zone, the families of M11 will be allowed to continue to catch animals so long as the traps themselves are small.

As Stornoway's feasibility study estimated there to be about \$25 billion worth of diamonds in the area around the Otish Mountains, the cash benefits to

the over 4000 people of Mistissini stand to be quite substantial. If there were any naysayers standing against the Mecheshoo Agreement, they did not make their voices heard that day. The company and the council of Mistissini are forming a committee composed of locals and Stornoway execs to oversee any concerns and grievances.

Stornoway's CEO praised the spirit with which his company was received by the people of Eeyou. He made it clear that even though his company is motivated by profit, they have sought willing partners in the operation.

"In the traditional model [of mineral exploitation], the importance of nature is often forgotten," said Manson. "We sought a social license. The Cree are our neighbours, employers and employees – they were on the land before we were there and will be there after we've left."

Coon Come reminded the assembled of that fact when he stated that regardless of the circumstances, the diamonds extracted are Cree diamonds. Shecapio echoed that sentiment when he spoke of Cree stewardship of the land.

"[Stornoway] took the time to sit down with us right from the beginning," he said. "It's been continuous negotiation and partnership with the people of Mistissini."



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New company on the horizon

CREECO signs partnership agreement with Dumas

By Amy German

Demonstrating its limitless potential, the Cree Regional Economic Enterprise Company (CREECO) has done it again by forging yet another strategic partnership agreement in order to form a new company; this time it's with mining and energy services company Dumas Contracting Ltd.

"We signed a partnership with them to look at the various potential in terms of the mining area. Dumas is an expert in starting up mines, underground mines and open-pit mines. They don't do much work on the surface area, but they do have another company, and, of course, we have Cree Construction that can do that too. So we are concentrating on their expertise in terms of setting up of mines of underground or open pit," said Jack Blacksmith, CREECO President.

According to Blacksmith, the move was done to capitalize on the recent Canada-wide mining boom. However, the partnership itself will see benefits for not only the Cree nation, but any Aboriginal group that is in an area of development as they will get to learn firsthand from CREECO's expertise.

Under this agreement, the yet-to-be-named company will provide specialized training, employment and business opportunities to members of all our business partners within First Nations communities.

And, this will be part of the mandate of this new company, as they are committed to creating sustainable business relationships that are mutually beneficial to First Nations groups Canada-wide so that everyone involved can take part in the prosperity.

"We had been discussing various companies, and the possibilities of working with them, for about four years. Finally, some of the guys thought that Dumas would be the best choice, so we went with them. We exchanged a lot of information to see if we were compatible in terms of the possible business we're getting into. And it proved to be

positive, so we've established a good relationship," said Blacksmith.

According to Blacksmith, the hope is that the new company will be able to capitalize on the Ring of Fire mining development in northern Ontario and work with the Aboriginal groups whose traditional territory this falls in.

This will be the third partnership agreement that CREECO has signed in recent years. The first being the new Quality Inn and Suites in Val-d'Or and the second being the formation of Eeyou

for the Cree of Eeyou Istchee. Blacksmith said that previously CREECO didn't have the necessary expertise to get into the actual start-up of a mine. With all of the work happening, Dumas' expertise will serve to take the Crees a long way.

And, Blacksmith said he is quite proud of how well this development deal will serve CREECO economically as forming this partnership came at the right price.

"There is actually zero dollars in terms of investment. We paid for our



Mr. Burger Greeff, CEO of Dumas, Mrs. Darlene Cheechoo, Vice-President of CREECO & President of CREECO-Dumas Mining, Mr. Jack R. Blacksmith, President/Chairman of CREECO Mr. Rodney W. Hester, Treasurer of CREECO-Dumas Mining

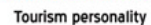
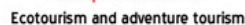
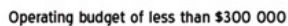
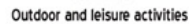
Baril, a new construction supplies distribution company.

Much like their previous partnerships, the new company will be led by a group of experienced executives from both parties. CREECO Vice-Chairperson Darlene Cheechoo will be the company's President and CREECO Treasurer Rodney Hester will be on the Board of Directors.

Once more, this new partnership will serve to open up new territory in terms of CREECO's capabilities in the business world, broadening the horizons yet again

own expertise in terms of evaluation of this project and they paid their own. We each put in a dollar in terms of setting up this company and we'll go forward from there. In terms of when we come to projects, we will look at the cash flow at that time. Other than that, hardcore investments, putting down some money to start this company, there is none," said Blacksmith.

But, this partnership will no doubt be yet another revenue generator for this powerhouse Cree entity.

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GraphCat enr.

Inter-Tribal Youth Centre stays open

The Regroupement des centres autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) insists that it will continue to support the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre of Montreal, even though they have revoked the membership of the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal (NFCM).

The Inter-Tribal Youth Centre is the only centre of its kind in Montreal that aids First Nations youth. The RCAAQ reaffirmed that the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre will remain open regardless of the possible closing of the NFCM. The funding of the youth centre was threatened because the NFCM was not following the Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth (CCAY) program. The RCAAQ is now looking for a First Nations partner organization to sponsor the youth centre, independently of the NFCM.

The RCAAQ said it will continue to promote essential services for First Nations people in Montreal. They are seeking to mobilize First Nations people living in the city in order to meet their needs and interests.

The NFCM's choice to unilaterally terminate their bilateral agreement was the primary reason the centre lost its membership. The RCAAQ stated that the NFCM did not fulfill their mandate, thus forcing the RCAAQ to suspend their membership.

Mistissini nurse honoured by Quebec Order of Nurses

Ghislaine Télémaque, a Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay nurse in Mistissini, is one of eight in the province to be awarded with the prestigious 2012 Florence Prize by the Quebec Order of Nurses.

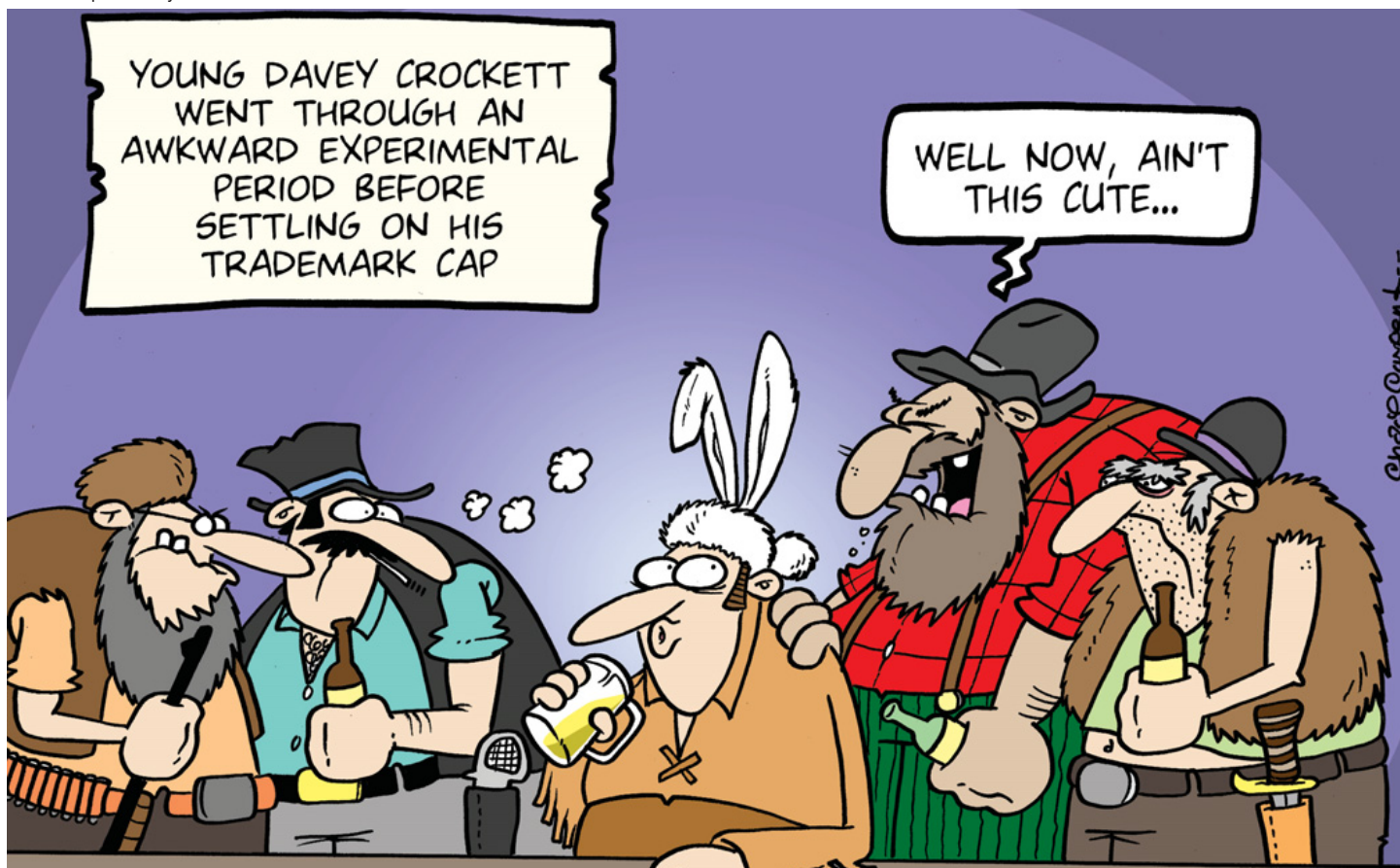
Télémaque was awarded the prize under the "Rayonnement international" category for the outstanding work she has done abroad as a nurse. Aside from having worked for the Cree Health Board since 1992, Télémaque has two other lines of work that she regularly engages in – working as a nurse on Coast Guard ships in the high Arctic and serving on medical teams deployed to war zones and disaster areas around the world.

Télémaque has worked for a wide variety of humanitarian organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières, Enfants du Monde, Médecins du Monde and Oxfam Québec to deliver medical care in places in dire need such as Haiti, Afghanistan, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo and Dominican Republic.

She will receive her award this May in Montreal where her international colleagues as well as the Cree Health Board will be there to congratulate her.

continued on page 27

Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com





On the streets to stay No funds for Val-d'Or's intoxicated itinerants

By Amy German

Among the many sights and sounds of spring in Val-d'Or, the annual reemergence of homeless encampments for the city's growing itinerant population has become one of them.

But, this should come as no surprise because if an individual finds himself down and out in Val-d'Or and a suffering from a substance-abuse problem, come springtime there is nowhere else to go but the streets as the overnight shelter, Le Dortoir, closes in April and very few other resources are available.

This can lead to problems, particularly for homeless Aboriginals who have a much higher profile and therefore much more stigmatized.

In March, the francophone media had a firestorm over an incident involving two homeless Aboriginals who went into a store and stole some merchandise that they were planning to resell. As a result the owner was traumatized and wrote a letter to the papers describing her ordeal and the perpetrators. While race relations in Val-d'Or are at the best of times somewhat tense, the incident underlined how adding homelessness to the mix makes for bad bedfellows.

"They frightened the woman who owned the store. I understand that. It was two intoxicated Native people who did this and so it creates a sense of inse-

curity to see a big-city reality in a small town. This situation is heightened because of the increased number of Aboriginal people who are homeless. The configuration of Val-d'Or's downtown strip makes it so much more visible," explained Edith Cloutier, Executive Director of the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre (VDNFC).

According to Cloutier, incidents like these are bound to happen because the services are at a bare minimum, even though there is a social structure in place that could provide aid for these individuals. The VDNFC has stepped up and provides frontline workers. At the same time, a new building is under construction to provide shelter for these homeless individuals. But all this isn't enough.

In Cloutier's opinion, while homelessness shouldn't be regarded solely as an Aboriginal issue as there are Non-Natives on the streets as well, getting all of the Aboriginal partners involved would be the best strategy for now.

"We're at the point where we need our own leadership – Cree leadership and Algonquin leadership – to get involved because they are absent in this dynamic. We are all a community and what I hear from the leadership is that they represent the people of their nation no matter where they live. So we need

to sit down and have a very honest discussion about this reality," said Cloutier.

According to Stéphane Grenier, President of La Piaule (a local shelter) and director of the Master's program in Social Work at l'Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue, tensions are growing between the homeless and Val-d'Or's general population as both groups become more familiar with each other, partially out of racial prejudice but also out of fear.

"Unfortunately, the problem is not with white homeless people in the street, the problem is with Aboriginal homeless people. A drunk guy in the street like me is funny, a drunk Cree in the street is not. That's why the people are afraid of them," said Grenier.

With the lack of vacancies in Val-d'Or and the lack of services for these individuals, what ends up happening is that the homeless literally have nowhere to go and end up in the downtown area. Despite this, Grenier will be closing Le Dortoir for the season by the end of April and besides a shower and a sandwich from time to time at La Piaule, no other resources will be offered to these individuals.

"For four years now we have been operating Le Dortoir, and what can I say is that it has become a social need. That doesn't mean that it's a social need for

six months, it's a social need for the year. We need a larger team to run it. We need maybe a day centre or a drop-in centre for this population.

"I've told everybody: the problem is that they're walking around drunk in the streets. We need a place, when they are too drunk and the people are afraid of them, to bring them to like a drop-in centre. There we will take care of them and help them sleep it off," said Grenier.

When the Nation last reported on this subject in 2010, the issue was that Grenier had not been able to find a location to house the Le Dortoir shelter and he needed additional funding so that the new La Piaule building could include the shelter.

Having successfully raised the necessary \$3 million for the new building that will house both facilities, Grenier is now faced with another challenge – finding the funding to actually run both operations. Though he already has what he needs for the shelter for the sober homeless, it is Le Dortoir once again that doesn't have sufficient funding when it comes to staff.

So, whereas Grenier says he can open new beds for the homeless, particularly for those who are inebriated and difficult to care for, without an additional \$300,000 in operational funding, the new Le Dortoir won't see its September grand opening.

Augmenting the budget for these facilities is easier said than done. While Aboriginals certainly do make up a percentage of the clientele, they don't make up all of the clientele.

Grenier said that approaching the Aboriginal communities is a possibility, but some communities have the means to help their own people in Val-d'Or.

Research previously done on homelessness in the region showed that some of the individuals who end up on the streets in Val-d'Or are there because they are fleeing situations on their own reserves where housing is scarce or because their social scenario has become too difficult. Without anywhere else to go they seek refuge in Val-d'Or because it is the first city they hit on the way south.

"I would prefer that they invest in their own community to stop people from coming to Val-d'Or, so it would be better," said Grenier.

"A part of the solution is the provincial government. They should have new ways to work with First Nations and to give them more access to social services. Another part of the solution is with the federal government, they should also invest. In Val-d'Or, we are not on the map of homelessness in Canada because the vacancy data that is being used is from 2000 and back then there were no homeless people here."

Rewind to 2000 and Val-d'Or was actually having issues unloading homes as employment in the area had dried up. Twelve years on and now the community has the lowest vacancy rate in the entire country.

And so despite the fact that Grenier's books show that he helped 230 different people at Le Dortoir and an additional 312 at La Piaule over the course of a year, the organization can't get more than \$150,000 to operate annually.

A weekly report dated February 27 that Grenier shared with the Nation shows that Le Dortoir helped six non-Natives, 20 Algonquins and 13 Crees. Despite these records, Grenier said the

clientele is Aboriginal. It is their belief that all of these individuals can simply go back to their home communities and are therefore not homeless.

Grenier said he keeps being told that the agency will deal with the problem but that they need more numbers, statistics and studies done on the issue. At the same time he is also being told that they simply don't have the funding for the project.

As long as Grenier gets the funding so that the service delivery can begin, that is all that matters to him.

Looking at the situation from a political angle, Romeo Saganash, a Cree from Waswanipi and the region's MP, said he sees the need for more services for the homeless. He says providing for these individuals is everyone's responsibility.

"One of the things that should happen in the near future is to get all the political municipal actors together and address this issue. We need to sit down, discuss it and see what we can do," said Saganash.

Saganash said he sees this problem on a daily basis. The building where his riding office is located attracts many homeless individuals looking for shelter and they are often hanging out near the entrance and hallway.

In his opinion, this issue needs immediate attention as it is still a relatively

"WE'RE AT THE POINT WHERE WE NEED OUR OWN LEADERSHIP – CREE LEADERSHIP AND ALGONQUIN LEADERSHIP – TO GET INVOLVED BECAUSE THEY ARE ABSENT IN THIS DYNAMIC."

L'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux won't take his funding requests seriously, insisting that the numbers are far fewer than he claims.

"Our problem is with the agency. They are just starting to believe that there is a problem in the streets of Val-d'Or. They don't want to see that there are homeless people. They have got the same statistics as you, but they say that no, it's more like 12-13 people who are really homeless in Val-d'Or and the others are just Aboriginal people who sleep here in the street," said Grenier.

Grenier said the agency gives him a hard time about his numbers because his

new phenomenon, not having existed just five years ago. It is his concern that the situation will only worsen without immediate action.

"It's a shared responsibility. The province has a role to play, the federal government has a role to play, and the Aboriginal communities have a role to play in all of this. This is not solely Val-d'Or's issue. All the different levels of government have come together and deal with it," said Saganash.

Only time will tell how well these bodies will work in partnership to help some of society's most vulnerable individuals.

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Busy reading

Literacy program succeeding at Mistissini's Voyageur Memorial

By Brandon Judd

Two years after starting the Success For All (SFA) program, teachers at the Voyageur Memorial School in Mistissini have seen their students' reading skill improve by leaps and bounds.

In September 2009, Voyageur Memorial started the SFA, a heavily researched literacy program formulated at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. They sent groups of their teachers down to the U.S. for training sessions to learn how to teach the program, which is has a rigid structure meant to make testing success from both students and teachers easier. Voyageur Memorial interim principal Bjorn Olsen says being part of the program has also opened up teachers to unprecedented new resources.

"We now have access to thousands of dollars of material which is all categorized and teachers can



pick up a teaching package for a number of weeks of work,” he said.

Students are grouped according to their reading level; the preliminary group is called “Roots”, and stresses learning the basics of letter sounds and pronunciation for kids just learning English, while the second level, called “Wings”, focusses on word meanings and the significance of synonyms. Olsen says results from both groups are clear.

“I’ve heard parents say that when they go to Montreal, their kids see the McDonald’s M and start making the mmm sound,” he said, chuckling. “And the data is encouraging: we’re finding the number of Roots groups is diminishing and the number of Wings groups is increasing, which means we’re having success.”

When Voyageur began the program, there was only one student at the expected reading level for their grade. As of today, 53 students have reached or exceeded this level. The school’s goal for the program is to have 40% of their students at or above their grade’s read-

ing level by the end of June. For the school of 290, this entails having 116 strong readers – meaning they are almost halfway to their goal in just over two years.

“Attendance is a problem for some kids, and if they missed a lot of class in Grade 1, they might not have learned some of the basic sounds,” he explained. “There can be gaps in their education

REGULAR TESTING MEANS THAT STUDENTS WHO ARE LACKING SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE ARE TAUGHT IT, INSTEAD OF BEING ALLOWED TO FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS AND MISS OUT ON BASIC KNOWLEDGE.

The SFA program stresses the importance of data, and to keep track of progress it tests students every eight weeks. Those students who have progressed are moved into a more advanced group, while those who are still struggling with certain concepts may repeat the last level. Olsen says this kind of accountability is an important development.

[because of this], so quite a few students never picked up the basics.”

Regular testing means that students who are lacking specific knowledge are taught it, instead of being allowed to fall through the cracks and miss out on basic knowledge. And the program’s structure means children are getting almost two hours of dedicated literacy time every day: 90 minutes in school, much of

Hydlo and FRIENDS Online



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The contest will run from March 14 to April 22, 2012 and is only open to residents of the Aboriginal communities of Eeyou Istchee who are 18 years of age or older. One entry per participant. The prize will be drawn and the winner announced on April 25 at 8:30 a.m., during the broadcast of the Hydlo and Friends program on JBCCS.

The best assessment of the program's success comes from its benefactors. When the Nation visited Voyageur Memorial, our photographer asked a young girl in Grade 1 if he could take her picture. Her response? "Sorry, no. I'm too busy reading."

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Financing Shannen's Dream

Does the federal budget fund educational equality?

By Amy German

Shannen Koostachin, the late Cree youth leader from Attawapiskat, once had a dream that every child in Canada would attend a "safe and comfy" school, a luxury many First Nations children across Canada do not experience. Today, Parliament even agrees that this should be a reality. But, the big question is will the Conservative government put its money where its mouth is and finance this dream.

"SHANNEN'S DREAM WASN'T ABOUT PARTIAL EQUALITY. IT WAS ABOUT EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY. IT'S ABOUT EVERY CHILD HAVING A SAFE AND PROPER SCHOOL AND HAVING EQUITABLE AND CULTURALLY BASED EDUCATION."

As on-reserve schools are funded on average 22% less than their general population counterparts, the 15-year-old Koostachin spent the last few years prior to her untimely accidental death in 2010 lobbying for a school in her own community and for equal funding for other reserve schools. Since her death, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCSC) has continued the fight for this equality in hopes of ending educational apartheid under the banner of Shannen's Dream.

After years of lobbying, protest marches and letter-writing campaigns by children from across Canada, Motion 202, dubbed "Shannen's Dream", was debated in Parliament and passed unanimously on February 27.

But, to end this inequality proper funding must be in place and, according to Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the FNCFCSC, this budget didn't see

First Nations children get the equality they so badly need.

"Shannen's Dream wasn't about partial equality. It was about equality of opportunity. It's about every child having a safe and proper school and having equitable and culturally based education. The federal government's budget is really a drop-in-the-bucket approach to equality, something that has been carried on by the federal governments for decades," said Blackstock.

Ottawa announced a new \$275 million over three years for First Nations education with \$100 million earmarked for early literacy programming among other supports and \$175 million to go to building and renovating schools on reserves.

While Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said that this funding was about the government working to "unlock the potential of Canada's First Nations children", opposition critics have argued that this money falls significantly short when what was needed was more in the ballpark of \$500 million to get Native education up to snuff.

"What Harper's announcement signaled for me is that the current government along with past government has been comfortable with the idea of racial discrimination against children as being a legitimate fiscal restraint measure. And, the second thing it signaled to me is that there is no end-date as to when these inequalities are expected to be put to bed for First Nations kids," said Blackstock.

Getting back to the foundation's namesake, Blackstock said that Koostachin would often mention in her public speaking engagements how much she hated broken promises. While at the time this was in reference to how Aboriginal Affairs had once promised Attawapiskat a new elementary school and then reneged, claiming they didn't



Shannen Koostachin

have enough money to build one, the situation remains the same.

As for the funding that will actually come, Blackstock doubts that it will even make a major impact.

"I don't even think it's a finger in the dyke. If you look, for example, at the schools that need to be built... this is not going to build a lot of schools, it's not even going to renovate many of them.

"What we are talking about here is the lives of some children may get a little bit better, but many won't be affected at all by this budget, they will continue to be in the poor conditions they are currently in. The fact that there is no end-date for it really worries me because that doesn't provide any sense of hope or any kind of markers of where we can say "Ok, well, you did this in this budget after signing Shannen's Dream, so when are you going to make the dream that much more real?" said Blackstock.

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Bonding together

Cree and Mohawk youth enjoy a cultural exchange

By Akiva Levitas

Sharing stories and participating in communal events has been and will always be the best way to transmit a culture from one generation to the next. However, it's not that common that this cultural transmission happens outside families and the community.

But every now and then there comes a chance to share between communities across great distances. Jacko Otter has

been partaking in such an exchange while studying to become an Interactive Multimedia Developer at Algonquin College in Ottawa with several Mohawk youth from Akwesasne.

It started six years ago when a group of six came up to Waswanipi looking for a guide to hunt caribou. Ever since then, they've been hunting and fishing every year.

Ronnie Otter, Jacko's father, said, "It's common that such sharing happens. It's a good thing to learn from one another." Stories from their Elders that are passed down through the family are shared when they are out in the wilderness as are the usual hunting stories which may or may not have some slight exaggerations.

The exchange happens based on the season and where it's better to go hunting and fishing. In the summer, the Mohawk youth travel to the northern communities of Waswanipi, Chisasibi and Nemaska for the fishing. During the winter, they go up to hunt caribou. This year's haul was nine caribous, while on a previous winter they bagged 21.

The springtime is when Jacko goes down to Ontario and hunts geese. They're so plentiful down south even non-Native sports hunters have been allowed to hunt. Ronnie Otter said, "They are easier to hunt because they are calmer and land nearby, whereas here they fly overhead and rarely land nearby."

When out on the hunt they are pretty successful with one outing on the lake catching 40 geese. Jacko said, "The boat was so full that the guy with me said we better go or we would sink."

Jacko's love for nature is what serves as his main muse while studying design and photography. He said, "I'd rather take photos of nature than a boring old city. Plus the teachers love them." For a final project, he's shooting video during his hunting trips and incorporating the footage into a presentation on his experiences.

Such exchanges, though fruitful, are uncommon due to the distance between First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. But with every conversation that children have with their neighbouring peers, they act as ambassadors for their communities and help preserve their culture for the future.



Jacko's Mohawk friend Walter Benedict



Stornoway wishes a prosperous and safe goose hunting season to all hunters of the Cree Nation!

[illegible]

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The new generation

The 20th Cree Minor Hockey & Broomball Tournament

By Daniel Coyle

The 20th Annual Cree Minor Hockey and Broomball Tournament took place on the long weekend April 5-8. This year's edition of the tournament saw 150 teams in 17 competitive categories take part in 295 games, played in five arenas in four communities across the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, including Val-d'Or, Malartic, Senneterre and Barraute.

As usual, tournament headquarters were based at the Air Creebec Centre (ACC) in Val-d'Or. In addition to the opening ceremonies, the final games for most categories were held on ACC ice, including the Midget Hockey Competitive (full contact), Teen Girls Hockey, Bantam Hockey Competitive (full contact), Novice Hockey Competitive, Pee Wee Hockey Competitive and Atom Hockey Competitive championship games.

In the Midget Hockey Competitive (full contact) category, the Waswanipi Bulldogs went undefeated as they took home the championship banner. Andrew Kistabish, recently named to the Eastern Door & North squad which will play in next month's National Aboriginal Hockey Championships, led the way in the final with three goals, including the game winner for the Bulldogs. Kistabish also tied Waskaganish Junior Wings' Derek Demontigny for the tourney lead in scoring with 12 points in six games.

The tournament also marked the return home of Deverick Ottereyes, who suited up for the Bulldogs after his successful rookie season with the QMJHL PEI Rocket.

In the Teen Girls Hockey category, the Moose Cree Lady Hawks were awarded the championship banner after the Val-d'Or Magny Électrique squad was forced to forfeit the final game due to a number of injuries. It was an unfor-

tunate turn of events, since neither team gave up a goal during the qualifying round, setting the stage for a much anticipated final between what were clearly the two best teams in the category. In fact, the top three Teen Girls scorers in the tournament were all members of Magny Électrique. Dana Morrison of the Oujé-Bougoumou Junior Lady Hawks, who recently returned from a European hockey tour with a team of selects from Eastern Ontario, finished fourth in Teen Girls scoring.

The Moose Cree Paytahpun Oilers sailed undefeated through the qualifying round of the Bantam Hockey Competitive (full contact) category. The Oilers, led by Dakota Reuben and Calvin Navean, who finished 1-2 in scoring in the tourney, faced little opposition reaching the category final. But once there, they faced a tough challenge from second place Team Waswanipi before eking out a hard fought 3-2 victory.

In Novice Hockey Competitive action, the Val-d'Or Agnico Eagles bounced back from a qualifying round loss to the Mistissini Mini-Trappers to knock off the Mini-Trappers in the championship game by a score of 6-5. The Mini-Trappers grabbed an early 4-1 lead before giving up three 2nd period goals. After falling behind early in the third, the Eagles forced overtime with a late goal before capping their victory five minutes into OT. Mistissini's Isreal Mianscum led all Novice scorers with 20 points in six games. In fact, Mianscum scored more

goals (17) than any other player had points throughout the tourney.

In Pee Wee Hockey Competitive action, Team Waswanipi rolled undefeated to a championship banner victory, defeating the Wemindji Pee Wee Wolves in the final by a score of 4-1. However, Waswanipi first had to dispatch a tough Waskaganish Wings team in a semi-final



match that went to OT. After Anthony Bedard, who led the tourney in scoring, gave the Waswanipi an early 2-0 lead, the Wings battled back to tie the game in the minutes of the third before Bedard was again the hero, scoring early in overtime to clinch a spot in the final.

While Jayson Nastien of the Waswanipi Wolf Pack was the dominant score in the Atom Hockey Competitive category, it was the Val-d'Or Eagles that took home the championship banner. The Eagles struggled mightily in the qualifying round, barely making it to the playoffs. But once the playoffs got underway, they were dominant, eventually defeating Waswanipi in the final by a score of 7-1.

For a full recap of all games and stats, go to:

www.tournoisenligne.ca/home.do?t=1700

Hydlo and FRIENDS unplugged

Why the spring instream flow release cannot be delayed

Spring has sprung, the geese are back and the spring instream flow will soon be released into the Rupert. In March, record high temperatures were felt throughout Québec. The spring instream flow will probably be released as of May 8th; this means that the river's flow will be increased from 127 m³/s to 416 m³/s over a five-day period and then maintained at 416 m³/s for 45 days, to allow for spawning.



The Rupert Spillway

In 2011, the release of the spring instream flow, combined with the effects of record precipitation the previous fall and winter, caused problems for a number of land-users along the Rupert, particularly for Nemaska residents who regularly hunt goose along the river's shores. According to the hunters, the water levels rose so quickly upstream of the weirs that it became difficult—if not impossible—to hunt goose there. Other areas, now permanently submerged, can no longer be used as hunting grounds.

Spawning comes first

At the request of Nemaska land users, HQ/SEBJ considered the possibility of delaying the release of the spring instream flow by a week. The issue was looked at from all sides: disrupted hunting sites were identified, the results

of the follow-up studies on spawning were examined and flood-recurrence probabilities were analyzed. A joint decision was made in concert with the members of the Monitoring Committee that no changes could be made to the instream flow regime without several more years' worth of spawning data, especially given the positive results obtained since the partial Rupert diversion.

Solutions based on needs

The land users were not left high and dry, however. Meetings were held with the tallymen and their families who had lost hunting grounds due to high water levels, to explain the situation and to encourage them to propose solutions based on their individual needs.

For more information, visit www.hydloandfriends.com

Fewer cuts

Aboriginal Affairs lose the least in Ottawa's 2012 budget

By Akiva Levitas

This year's federal budget released March 29 is primarily focused on cutting spending and increasing growth in Canada. Although many programs have received a reduction in their budgets, Aboriginal Affairs and First Nations Development only had a 2.7% cut.

A large portion of the funding to key areas of First Nation development is going towards education. Much of the \$275 million in funding over three years will go towards building and renovating schools with \$100 million going to provide early literacy programming along with other services.

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has suggested there is more money to come saying that this new funding is only the "initial step". But the funding falls far short of the \$500 million the Assembly of First Nations says is necessary to set Native schools on an equal footing with provincial schools.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo said in response to the budget announcement, "The investments in education in the budget indicate that the voices of our youth are perhaps beginning to be heard but we must do more. We will be relentless in our efforts to ensure sustainable and secure funding for education."

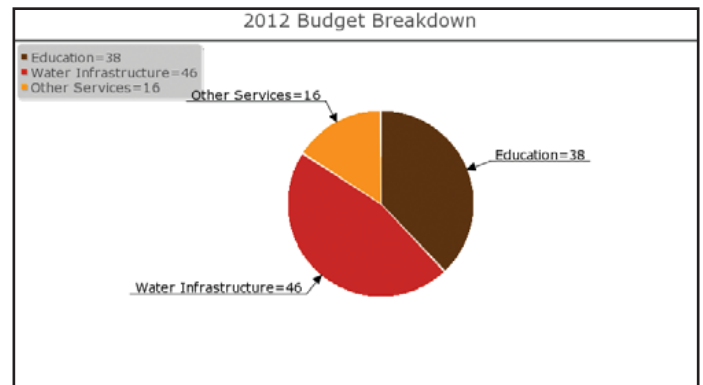
Roberta Jamieson, president of Indspire, a charitable organization that promotes Indigenous education, stated, "The budget makes it clear that the prosperity of the country is inextricably tied to change for First Nations education."

"THE BUDGET MAKES IT CLEAR THAT THE PROSPERITY OF THE COUNTRY IS INEXTRICABLY TIED TO CHANGE FOR FIRST NATIONS EDUCATION."

Services to students will also be receiving a well-needed boost. The funding will improve incentives for Natives both on the reserve and off with the renewal of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. Jamieson said, "This badly needed investment in capital infrastructure will produce results, demonstrating why even more funding for quality school environments is so essential."

The cuts in funding to Aboriginal Affairs amounts to 2.7% compared to the average reduction of 6.9% across all other government departments. Finance received the largest cut at 16%, followed by Safety at 9.9%.

Although the Canadian Healthcare Association (CHA) recognizes the importance of investments in education and water infrastructure, the cuts of 6.4% to health will reduce the funds accessible to medical research as well as other areas. The news of \$100 million being allocated for the Aboriginal mental-



health programs was also announced in this year's budget adding some much-needed resources to the sector.

In regards to the cuts, Atleo said, "Any cuts at Aboriginal Affairs must not come at the expense of programs and services for First Nations families and communities." The cuts the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development portfolio will amount to \$252.6 million over three years.

The savings will be achieved by restructuring, a leaner bureaucracy and changes to business processes while maintaining and improving service delivery to communities.

The largest portion of the funding towards First Nations, \$331 million over three years went towards developing water infrastructure to support the development of a long-term strategy to improve water quality in First Nations communities. Although any added funding is welcome it still falls short seeing as a national assessment commissioned by the federal government found that \$4.9 billion over 10 years is the amount required to achieve an improvement and maintain the water systems.

Commercial fishing received \$33.5 million along with \$99.2 million to address the cost of permanent flood mitigation measures undertaken for the 2011 floods.

Also in the budget was an additional \$12 million to address the issue of on-reserve family violence bringing the total budget up to \$30.4 million in order to improve the lives of women and children on-reserve.

The other focus of the budget aside from cutting is to improve growth in the region. In this regard the government is proposing legislation to shorten the review time for major economic developments.

Along with \$400 million to help private-sector investments in the region grow, \$13.6 million will go to promoting consultations with Aboriginals through the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Increasing the dialogue between the federal and provincial governments and First Nations will ensure the region develops in line with the needs of its people.



September 19, 2012
is the deadline for Independent Assessment Process applications.
The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.
The healing continues.

On September 19, 2007 the Indian Residential Schools Settlement became effective. An important deadline is now approaching.

Under the terms of the Settlement, September 19, 2012 is the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) Application Deadline. Applications submitted after this date will not be accepted. The IAP is a complex process. Do not wait until just before the deadline to begin, as the application form can take time to complete.

What is the IAP? The IAP is an out-of-court process created to resolve claims of abuse at Indian Residential Schools. People who suffered sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, or certain other wrongful acts which caused serious psychological consequences while at a recognized residential school may receive money through the IAP. Awards are based on a point system for different abuses and resulting harms.

Is the IAP different than the Common Experience Payment? Yes. The IAP process is separate and different from the Common Experience Payment (CEP) application process. The CEP is a payment to those who lived at a recognized residential school. The IAP provides payments for specific abuse suffered while at a recognized residential school. Under the settlement, former students could apply for the CEP, or for the IAP, or for both the CEP and IAP. The CEP application deadline was September 19, 2011; however, where former students can establish that they were unable to submit their CEP application due to disability, undue hardship or exceptional circumstances they can still apply for CEP up until September 19, 2012.

Which schools are included? The list of recognized Indian Residential Schools has been updated. Decisions regarding a number of other schools are in progress. A complete and updated list of recognized residential schools is available at www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca.

Who can apply? You can apply for the IAP if you experienced

(1) sexual abuse, (2) serious physical abuse, or (3) certain other wrongful acts which caused serious psychological consequences, while you were either (a) living at a residential school, (b) a student at a residential school, or (c) under the age of 21 and allowed to be at a residential school to take part in authorized school activities. It is not a requirement to have lived at one of the recognized residential schools in order to make an IAP claim for abuse that may have occurred there.

How do I apply for IAP? To apply for an IAP payment you must complete and submit an application form by **September 19, 2012**, to Indian Residential Schools Independent Assessment Process, Suite 3-505, 133 Weber Street North, Waterloo, Ontario, N2J 3G9. **Applications after this date will not be accepted.** The IAP is a complex process and it is strongly recommended that you hire a lawyer if you wish to submit an IAP application. Do not wait until just before the deadline to begin, as the application form can take time to complete. To get an application, please call 1-866-879-4913 or go to www.iap-pei.ca or www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca.

Do I need a lawyer? All of the parties who developed the IAP believe that claimants should have a lawyer to represent them as the IAP is complex

and involves difficult legal concepts and processes. It is not required, but it is strongly recommended that you hire a lawyer to help you. For a list of lawyers, visit www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca. If you do not wish to hire a lawyer you can call 1-866-879-4913 to obtain information about the support available to you.

What if I have already applied for the Independent Assessment Process? If you have already applied, and have not received any information or have questions about your IAP application, please contact the phone number below.

How can I find out the status of my application? There are 3 ways to find out the status of your application:

- 1) Contact your lawyer or legal representative;
- 2) Call 1-866-879-4913; or
- 3) Send an email at info@iap-pei.ca

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Seeking solutions

A panel discussion at Concordia University tackles Native issues

By Akiva Levitas

On Wednesday, April 11, Liberal Concordia hosted a panel of experts to discuss Aboriginal issues, such as education and closing of Projets Autochtones du Québec's (PAQ) homeless shelter.

On the panel were Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett for St. Paul's, Kahnawake Grand Chief Michael Delisle, Donat Savoie, the former Executive Director of Canada's Inuit Relations Secretariat, Jean-François Arteau, the Executive Assistant to the President of the Avataq Cultural Institute, and PAQ Director Adrienne Campbell.

The panel's initial focus was how the Harper government has sidelined Native issues by dealing with the problems as just one other department it needs to worry about. Bennett opened by saying, "Aboriginal education should be for all Canadians. If they don't know the history and the culture, then an apology is just window dressing."

Her inspiration for the goal of educating all Canadians is New Zealand where great progress was made after Maori culture and history were introduced into the basic curriculum. What happened there was once students understood the past, they learned to move forward which in turn led to their parents following.

"We have a problem in this country. We have jobs with no workers and workers with no jobs," she stated. "The fastest growing segment in this country have to be the solution for our job issue." But the solution can only begin once the First Nations develop a secure cultural identity and regain a sense of control.

Bennett concluded by saying, "Let the First Nations, Inuit and Métis set their own path, and our job will be to help."

Delisle expanded the need to include Aboriginal history in the Canadian school curriculum. His primary job as a representative of his community is to inform



"WE HAVE A PROBLEM IN THIS COUNTRY. WE HAVE JOBS WITH NO WORKERS AND WORKERS WITH NO JOBS."

non-Natives on the history most don't know.

Reflecting on the injustice that happened to the Mohawks he said, "We are realistic, not looking to displace Canada. But a lot of things were done through laws which led to 24,000 acres of land being taken away, and we want it back." For that to happen the entire country would have to know the history which is best when done through the guidance of Elders and leaders.

Arteau, who has held senior positions in the Kativik Regional Government and Makivik Corporation, shared what he knew about the issues facing the Inuit and First Nations communities.

The issues that he brought up were small housing units crammed with people and Jean Charest's Plan Nord. The housing problem is currently a major obstacle in allowing the Inuit to move forward which all levels of government need to help in tackling.

Arteau is against the Plan Nord because it runs counter to what Bennett states is Canada's job, which is to help out with the path that the First Nations, Métis and Inuit choose to take. Instead, he has come up with a proposal he calls Plan Nunavik in order to bring back a

sense of control to the northern communities.

The closing of the PAQ homeless shelter in downtown Montreal will leave a void the city can't afford to lose. Because of a domino effect in the slashing of the health budget, the CLSC has refused to renew the shelter's lease and will be leaving it homeless.

Campbell spoke about the precarious situation that the shelter is in and why it is so important in establishing a thriving Aboriginal community in Montreal. When Inuit and First Nations first visit Montreal it can get pretty overwhelming which is why PAQ provided cultural services that aren't offered elsewhere.

The sense of community and the help in transitioning the shelter provides will be lost if it cannot find a new building. The main issue is that most boroughs would rather not have a homeless shelter in their neighbourhood let alone an Aboriginal one.

Because of this dual layer of discrimination it is even more important to help them as they are vulnerable. Campbell said, "The people on the streets are just as much citizens of Montreal as you and I sitting here."

NATIVE WOMEN'S SHELTER OF MONTREAL FOYER POUR FEMMES AUTOCHTONES DE MONTRÉAL



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New bans on bait-fish announced

Serge Simard, the Minister for Natural Resources and Wildlife and Minister responsible for the Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and Côte Nord regions, announced that as of April 1 the use of live bait-fish will be prohibited throughout Quebec.

And, beginning in April 2017, the use of live or dead bait-fish will also be banned.

The move comes from the Quebec government as a measure designed to reduce the risks associated with the use of bait-fish.

According to the ministry, the use of bait-fish increases the risk of introducing viruses, bacteria, parasites and diseases, such as viral hemorrhagic septicaemia. There is also the risk of invasive species, such as the round goby, which may contaminate watercourses.

In a press release, Simard stated, “Fishers are increasingly concerned about the negative impacts of bait-fish, and only a handful of fishers still use them. Our intention today, in announcing the new measures, is to facilitate the transition towards new practices.

“Fishers now have a full year to adjust their habits, and we are confident they will be able to do so by the time the new regulation comes into force.”

More info:

www.mrnf.gouv.qc.ca/english/publications/online/wildlife/fishing-regulations/regles-generales/bait-fish.asp



Justin Trudeau beats Senator Patrick Brazeau in boxing event

With the referee ending the match in the third round, Liberal MP Justin Trudeau was the triumphant winner over Conservative Senator Patrick Brazeau in a white-collar charity boxing match.

Trading in their parliamentary best for respective Liberal red and Conservative blue boxing attire, the two had only sparred previously over Twitter but attracted a sold-out crowd at the Ottawa event to benefit the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation.

According to CBC News, the referee ended the match when Trudeau managed to back Brazeau into a corner using a series of heavy blows to the head and body.

It was agreed upon by both parties that the loser would have his hair cut by the winner in front of the House of Commons the Monday following the fight. And so it was Trudeau who clipped off the Algonquin senator's long ponytail.

While Brazeau, who hails from Maniwaki, had been the pick for the match with all of his military and martial arts training, it was Trudeau's stamina from decades of boxing training that won out, resulting in a bloody nose for Brazeau.

Clarification

Your article on the Stornoway Diamond Corp. (Vol.19, No. 11, April 6, 2012) contained some out-of-dated information. The first and most important is that Eira Thomas no longer works at Stornoway. Matt Manson is our President and CEO. It was Matt and Eira that brought Stornoway and Contact Diamond together. A team that Eira was leading was responsible for the discovery of the Diavik Mine in 1994. That mine along with Ekati, put Canada into the number 4 position in countries producing diamonds at that time. We need to get this right as we rely on the Nation for a lot of our communication to the community of Mistissini.

Nick Thomas

Manager Investor Relations
Stornoway Diamond Corp.

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Deconstructing the contradictions

The contradictions are what make us interesting. The person who sends a yearly cheque to PETA, the purist animal-rights group, but who still loves to dig into a thick, juicy steak. The business owner who supports higher taxes and encourages their employees to form a union. The skinny antiwar pacifist – the proverbial 98-pound weakling – who steps into a boxing ring and gleefully proceeds to pummel his muscled-bound opponent into a bloody mess.

These are all examples involving real people. Many of you might recognize the last one, which recently involved two high-profile politicians and received wall-to-wall media coverage. The contradictions may sometimes be more apparent than real, meaning that our expectations are confounded.

Depending on your point-of-view, the above-mentioned situations could more represent a state of hypocrisy than a contradiction. I would contradict that argument. The human character is a complex whole that is much, much more than a simple sum (or subtraction) of its parts.

For journalists and other storytellers, this seam is a rich one to mine. We love to unearth past statements by politicians that contradict their actions when are in power. US President Barack Obama is a heartbreaking goldmine in this sense, as his stirring campaign rhetoric wilts in the harsh realities of the compromises and outright



betrayal required by the exercise of wielding and retaining power.

And yet, the best chroniclers of the human condition are able to explore this territory with a minimum of judgment in an attempt to gain a maximum of understanding. Sometimes, living with contradictions is simply a condition of being alive.

It's possible to be a fervent environmentalist, for example, while engaging in the often-necessary evil of owning and operating a combustion-engine automobile. If a viable transportation alternative does not exist, and using a car is the only means of carrying out the good works that may be the driver's other laudable priorities in life (such as

providing for one's family), well, it's an overall balance that we're looking for. Hopefully, by the time we reach our deathbed, most of us can look back on our lives and feel that our good deeds outweighed our not-so-good ones.

There are, of course, other kinds of contradictions that don't invite such equivocation. Take the classic line from the Vietnam War era: "We had to destroy the village in order to save it." To the person who uttered it, the ends justified the means. To the rest of us, it's a contradiction that cannot be forgiven. That's how political ideology works to lessen our humanity; it's very effective at helping us justify actions that in reali-

ty completely contradict the creed one ostensibly espouses.

Personally, I am an anti-imperialist who nonetheless believes that armed intervention is sometimes necessary in order to prevent a greater evil, such as genocide. But I struggle with this position when the death toll mounts and the achievable goals get ever more blurry and distant.

In this vein, the worst forms of contradictions are those that brim with self-righteousness even as they cause terrible collateral damage. We are all familiar with the TV Holy Roller who broadcasts a poisonous but lucrative brew of religion and hatred, infecting many innocent bystanders with the cancer of shame.

Among the many victims of this cultural poison are the gay youth who end up committing suicide to escape the self-hatred they are taught to feel at a fragile age. And when the same televangelist is subsequently discovered in a seedy motel room with a male hustler and a bag of meth, he inevitably and

tearfully pleads for Christian forgiveness of his contradictions. He's only human, after all.

It's true. He is only human. Too bad his invisible victims didn't get the same consideration.

It's important to separate the honest contradictions from outright lies, however. The ostensible credo of our Conservative government is one of liberty and independence of state control. Yet, in action, the Harper government rampantly contradicts the most deeply held principles of its supporters.

The Tories attempted to implement blanket state surveillance of our online activities, though they are in temporary retreat in the face of universal public condemnation of this totalitarian tendency.

Would it always be so. They claim that the state shouldn't intervene in the economy, by picking winners or losers. And yet, now that the so-called free-market conservatives are in charge, they don't hesitate to use state power to implement back-to-work legislation

on union members who try to use their legal and democratic right to withhold their labour during contract negotiations with their employers (even as the Tories display endless tolerance for businesses that engage in long lock-outs of their unionized workforce).

Worst of all, the platitudes and rhetoric over promoting democracy abroad is revealed as empty when we discover that this government's majority was obtained last year by engaging in massive electoral fraud to prevent people from exercising their right to vote.

But I digress. Perhaps the will to power in the 21st century makes such contradictions necessary. Moral judgments of the state of contradiction may now be so much dust in the wind, and have as much impact.

Consider the classic quotation by the great American novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald. "The test of a first-rate intelligence," he observed, "is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

We need our northern trains

by Xavier Kataquapit

If you are a railway enthusiast then you got some sad news recently when the Ontario government announced that it would sell off most of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission (ONTC). That means that our northern Ontario lifeline to the south by train, the Northlander will be cancelled.

This cancellation of the Northlander is very bad news for northern residents on tight budgets. For people who travel south for health-care reasons, education and for First Nations, this historic connection from Cochrane through the North to the South means a lot.

Many don't realize that First Nation people were part of the work crews that built and maintained the rail lines from North Bay to Cochrane and Cochrane to Moosonee. My dad Marius was one of those workers when he was a young man. Labourers were killed and injured in the construction and maintenance of these rail lines which made life a lot easier for people who wanted to travel from up the James Bay coast and down to southern towns and cities.

I know that in the past there was a lot more freight travelling the rail lines from the North to the South and the South to the North. However, with the coming of the transport truck and the lobby groups that supports them, the rail system has suffered. It has also meant that there is a continuous stream of transport trucks travelling along the Highway 11 corridor. This trucking nightmare has cost many northerners their lives through accidents and the wear and tear on our northern roads is substantial.

I realize that fewer people are travelling by train these days on this northern rail line and less freight is being moved than in the past. However, I have also travelled a lot through Europe and I can see how important the train can be if properly supported, maintained and developed for transportation and freight.

We have been tearing up the rails in northern Ontario and right across Canada for the past 20 years. Just recently, it has

dawned on us that train travel is very efficient, reliable and safe. Today, communities are considering laying down new track as they have realized that train travel and rail transportation makes a lot of sense.

With the rising cost of fuel and highway maintenance, it makes sense that train travel will become more important in the future. It is too bad that the Ontario government is selling off most of the ONTC rather than funding it, developing it and making it more attractive for travellers and freight transportation. Instead, they will be selling it off to some private-sector company that will reap the benefits of the blood, sweat and tears that all our rail workers have sacrificed for decades.

Hopefully the government will stick to its promise of continuing to fund the Polar Bear Express. This train is critical to the First Nation people on the James Bay coast as there is no road travelling to the remote First Nations up the coast. The Polar Bear Express is also a real tourist draw to northern Ontario. We love our Polar Bear Express and we want to keep it.

It might not be important to some to be losing the Northlander, but if you were a senior who still wants to travel south to visit family, a cancer patient who needs to travel economically for treatment, a student who needs a cheap-and-safe way to get to college and university or a First Nation person who requires an affordable way to get to the city, then you might understand what the Northlander means to us. It is not just about numbers, profits and loss, it's about providing a much needed service to the public.

I see governments spending money in ways I just don't understand by funding wars in foreign countries and making it easier for the very rich to become even more wealthy. In the meantime, public services like transportation, health care and education are being cut back.

Dismantling the ONTC and selling it off is not a positive step for the people of the North. We need more and better train services, not less.



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BIRTHDAYS

Congratulations to Brittany Jolly and Stevie Hester on the safe arrival of their baby girl Shanelle Lizzie Kathleen on April 9th, 2012 at 7:15pm at 9lbs 2oz. Take good care of your new baby! From all of us at 84 Broadback!! Wask

CONGRATULATIONS

Wishing you your happiest birthday yet, a birthday too special to forget, so on this special day i would like to say to you, i hope you'll find happiness in whatever you do!! I am so lucky to have a husband like you, i love you jesse...love always your wifey...rachel m. Blacksmith

Happy 8th birthday to our daughter Mya Beauty Amber Whiskeychan, who will be celebrating her birthday on April 27th, 2012. We hope your day will be special as you are pretty lady! We love you so much! Again happy birthday to our beauty. With love from mom Bella and dad Mario from Wask!

EVENTS/RESOURCES

Aboriginal Youth Art Contest – Environmental Health

The National Aboriginal Health Organization announces an art contest open to Aboriginal youth across Canada to increase awareness and empower First Nations, Inuit and Métis with information to address environmental health issues to improve health. Use your creativity and help promote a healthy environment. Choose an environmental issue that may affect health both inside the home and outdoors. Think about the simple things that can be done to help keep you and your family healthy relating to indoor air, water, food safety, etc. Visit www.healthy-canadians.gc.ca/environment for more information on environmental health.

Categories include: essay/short story (250-500 words), poem, artwork (photography, drawing, painting, carving or sculpture), or video (1-3 minute documentary, spoken word or song). Chance to win Nintendo Wii Fit, Netbook or video camera. Submission deadline May 14, 2012. For more info: www.naho.ca/events/artcontest

Art Workshops for Youth: If you are between the ages of 15 and 29 you are invited to develop your creativity in weekly stone carving workshops being conducted at the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre located at 2001 boul. St. Laurent corner Ontario street (downstairs in the building of the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal). Workshops are every Thursday from 3pm to 6pm. For further information call 514-499-1854.

Need a tutor? The Homework Help Program offers free one-on-one tutoring to Aboriginal youth. The program will match the needs of the Aboriginal youth to McGill students that have knowledge in a particular school subject. To sign up your child send an e-mail to mcgillhomeworkhelp@gmail.com and let them know what grade your child is in and what subjects they need help with. The tutoring sessions will be held at the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre located downstairs at the Native Friendship Centre at 2001 St. Laurent Boulevard, corner Ontario street, between 4pm and 5:30pm on every Monday afternoon beginning in March 2012.

The Council on Palliative Care Presents a free public lecture to be given by Dr. Michael Kearney, who will speak on "Caring for self while caring for others at the end of life." on Tuesday, May 8, 2012 at 5:30pm at Moyse Hall in the Arts Building of McGill University at 853 Sherbrooke Street West. For more info call (514) 499-0345

The Best Story Ever Told is part of the after school series for youth that the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre has teamed up on with McGill University's Aboriginal Sustainability Project. This is a chance for Aboriginal youth to express their stories through a series of different art and media projects in a creative and fun atmosphere. The free workshops will be held every Wednesday between 4pm and 5:30pm in March through June of 2012 at the Inter-Tribal Youth Centre located downstairs at the Native Friendship Centre at 2001 St. Laurent Boulevard, corner Ontario street. For more information send an email to youth.coordinator@nfcsm.org or call 514-499-1854 ext. 2229

Great Blue Heron Poetry Contest & Sheldon Currie Fiction Contest. \$2,400 in prizes to be won! Fiction entries must be postmarked by May 31, 2012 and poetry must be postmarked by June 30, 2012. All submissions must be mailed to: The Antigonish Review Contest, P.O. Box 5000, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Canada, B2G 2W5. For complete guidelines, email TAR@stfx.ca, call 902-867-3962 or visit our website at www.antigonishreview.com.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth Helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

Parents' Helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parentshelpline.ca)

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333 (www.enfant-retourquebec.ca)

Drug Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogue-aidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling Addiction help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosviolenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality Resources Center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688 (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553 (www.suicide-quebec.net/)

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: www.afn.ca/residential-schools/resources

*We wish you all
a safe and happy Goose Break!*

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